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XVII.—A STUDY OF THOMAS OF ERCELDOUNE.

The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune is a poem dealing with the adventures of a Scottish prophet in fairyland, and with the predictions concerning Scotch history which it was his privilege to hear from the fairy queen. Of this poem the graceful "romance" occupies the first fytt, and the prophecies the remaining two fyfts.

The five MSS. known have been printed and described by Dr. J. A. H. Murray in his valuable edition of the poem.¹ The most satisfactory version, on the whole, is that in the well-known Thornton ms. (Lincoln A., 1. 17), written about A. D. 1430–1440. All the leaves in this ms. are more or less injured, but there are no serious gaps in the first fytt, and few in the second. "It is, in date probably, in form certainly, the oldest of the existing MSS., retaining the original Northern form of the language little altered; while it is free from most of the corruptions with which . . . the Cambridge and Cotton, abound." Ms. Cambridge, Ff. 5, 48, is in English handwriting of the middle of the fifteenth century. This ms., which gives a Southernized version of the original, is nearly illegible, and generally inferior. It has its value, however, for "those parts where the Thornton and Cotton are partially or wholly destroyed." Ms. Cotton, Vitellius E. x. presents a copy of *Thomas of Erceldoune* of about or slightly after 1450. It has been seriously impaired by fire, so that scarcely one line of the poem is perfect. In general, its text agrees closely with the Thornton; but besides numerous omissions it has "some singular additions of its own, as

¹ *The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*, E. E. T. S., No. 61.

lines 109–116, and others near the end.” Ms. Lansdowne 762, of about 1524–30, includes *Thomas of Erceldoune*, together with other prophetic literature. Besides omitting long passages, it gives three remarkable additions to our poem, lines 141–156, lines 237–248, and the reference to Robert II in lines 465–468. Ms. Sloane 2578 is a collection of prophecies, compiled in 1547. It gives only the second and third (or prophetic) fyfts of the poem. “The conclusion is also very much abridged, the writer seemingly being impatient of everything not prophetic. In other respects the text agrees very closely with the Thornton ms. both in its extent and readings, always excepting lines 577–604, found only in that ms.”¹

Professor Brandl,² after a careful examination of the mss., divides them into two groups, V L and T S C, and postulates as the sources of these groups two mss., x and an inferior y. All the existing mss., then, are independent of one another.

It is interesting and significant that the hero of the poem was an historical character. Thomas Rymour lived in Ercildoune, in the thirteenth century, and probably died, as Murray has shown, before 1294. Apparently he was actually a poet, for although, as Murray has pointed out, the name Rymour may be a mere patronymic, his reputation as poet and prophet began soon after his death, if not before it. From 1314 to 1870 he was quoted as an authority of undoubted weight.³ Besides the ballad of *Thomas Rymer*, and the poetical prophecies founded to a greater or less extent on *The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Ercel-*

¹ For Murray's collation of the various mss., and his numbering of the lines (followed by Brandl), see *T. of E.*, pp. lxii ff.

² Brandl, *Thomas of Erceldoune*, Berlin, 1880.

³ Murray, *T. of E.*, pp. xviii ff. Chambers, *Popular Rhymes of Scotland* (London, 1870), p. 211.

doune,¹ a good number of popular legends and of "derne" sayings have attached themselves to his name. Thomas is a sort of Scotch Merlin, generally believed to have had dealings with supernatural powers, and to have acquired thereby knowledge of future events.

Professor Child was even inclined to attribute to Thomas an account of his adventures with the Elf-queen.² "All four of the complete versions [of the *Romance and Prophecies*] speak of an older story. . . . The older story, if any, must be the work of Thomas." Yet Professor Child himself says that the appearance of the first person in part of the story is without significance. Any evidence that Thomas was the author of this or any story about himself, it would be difficult to find. We can never hope, unless fresh MSS. are forthcoming, to identify any verse as Thomas's own.

As for the authorship of *The Romance and Prophecies*, the poem itself furnishes no real clue. The narrative begins in the first person, but changes to the third, lapsing once for a moment into the first. So, as Murray says, "it is difficult to say whether it even claims to be the work of Thomas" (Murray, p. xxiii). Of any other author there is no trace. Even the nationality of the poet seems uncertain. Murray seems to assume that although some of the MSS. have been copied and changed by Englishmen the poem was written by a Scotchman; and the very nature of the topics treated in the second and third fyfts would, as Professor Child has said,³ tend to confirm this view. Brandl,

¹ Child, *Ballads* (1882-1898), I, 317-329; Murray, *T. of E.*, App. I, II, and III; Brandl, *T. of E.*, pp. 117 ff.

² Child, *Ballads*, I, 318.

³ Child, *Ballads*, I, 319. Yet how are we to explain the popularity in England, attested by the English MSS., of this poem devoted to the Scotch wars?

however, shows that the language might be that of a northern Englishman just as well as of a Scotchman.¹ He finds difficulty also in the poet's emphasis on Scotch reverses, and his bitter reviling of the Countess of Dunbar. (Brandl, pp. 41 f.). Still more serious is the confusion Brandl discovers in Murray's interpretation of the first prophecy in the second fytt. In this passage, which Murray understands as referring to 1333, we have Baliols, Frasers, Comyns—families on different sides in 1333—joined in one anathema. Brandl's explanation is simpler: that the passage refers to the defection of Baliol and others from England in 1295, and is therefore to be regarded as an English prophecy against all these persons. The nationality of the author is nowise indicated by the fact that the Scotch Thomas is his authority; for in a ms. earlier than 1320 we have a prophecy, ascribed to Thomas, in a southern or south-midland dialect.² The single trait which seems indubitably Scottish is the prediction of victory for the Scots at Halidon Hill—if indeed the transcriber's *Eldone hille* is to be so read—in the oldest ms., the Thornton. The later mss., conforming to fact, assign the victory to the English. May we not infer that this part of the poem, at least, was written by a Scotchman on the eve of Halidon Hill? With it we should perhaps link the romance and the introduction of the second fytt, with which its connection seems close. The passage preceding, relating to the Baliols, Comyns, and Frasers, may be an old prophecy coming down from the year 1295, and interpolated by some transcriber; and the whole poem,—originally, it may well

¹ Brandl, pp. 41, 51. He also suggests (p. 74) "dass der dichter, wie er seine prophezeiungen für ein jahrhundert älter ausgab als sie waren, auch seiner sprache ein archaisierendes colorit zu leihen versucht habe."

² Ms. Harl. 2253 lf. 127, col. 2. See Murray, pp. xviii f.

be, the work of a Scot,—may have been enlarged and altered by some transcriber antecedent to x and y.

The date of the poem in its present form can be pretty clearly determined. Murray points out (p. xxiv) that all the events of the second fytt are “historical and easily identified,” and that with the exception of the battle of Halidon Hill, which comes first,—or, if we follow Brandl’s interpretation, first after the lines relating to 1295—these events are arranged in chronological order from 1298 to 1388. Fytt II, then, was completed after 1388. The second prophecy of Fytt III seems to refer to Henry IV’s invasion in 1401; the rest is unintelligible. Part of Fytt III is thus seen to belong to the year 1401 or later. “The oldest ms. of the poem, the Thornton, itself clearly not an original, dates to 1430–1440, some time before which the poem must have existed in its present form, so that we have the period between 1402 and 1440, with strong reasons in favour of the earlier date, for its completion.”

But the prediction about Halidon Hill, coming out of order, before the chronological list in Fytt II, and being closely associated with the introduction of the fytt, stands alone. The question

Wha sall be kynge, wha sall be none,

was, as Murray shows, scarcely likely to be asked after 1401. The Thornton MS., moreover, seems to predict Scottish victory in that battle—a prophecy which events proved mistaken. This part of the poem, then, would seem to date from the year of the battle, 1333. Murray concludes (p. xxv) “that this part, with perhaps Fytt I, the conclusion, and an indefinite portion of Fytt III, which is in all probability a *mélange* of early traditional prophecies, may have been written on the eve of Halidon Hill, with a view to encourage the Scots in that battle.” Around this nucleus

other prophecies would naturally be clustered, and there is no telling how many times these predictions may have been revised or augmented before the version of 1402-1440 was written.

FORM AND STRUCTURE OF THE POEM.

The most interesting part of the poem, and the one which I shall especially treat, is the first fytt. In brief, the story is this: Thomas, lying under a "semely" tree on Huntley banks, sees a "lady gay" come riding over the lea. Thinking her the Virgin Mary, he runs to meet her. As they meet at Eldon tree, Thomas addresses the lady as "Queen of Heaven," but she disclaims the title, saying that she is of another country. When Thomas pleads for her love, she warns him that if she grants it, that will fordo all her beauty. But the lover persists, and the lady yields. It is as she had said; Thomas presently finds that the lady has become a gruesome and loathly object. She now tells him that he must take leave of sun and moon, and go with her, not to see earth again for a twelvemonth. Regardless of his pleadings (he has forgotten that he said a little while before

Here my trouthe j will the plyghte
Whethir pou will in heuene or helle),

she leads him into Eldon hill. For three days he wades in water to the knee, in utter darkness, hearing always the "swoghyng of the flode." When at last he complains of hunger the lady leads him into "a faire herbere." Naturally Thomas reaches for some of the fruit which grows there. But the lady checks him; if he takes this fruit, "the fiend" will "attheynt" him. Bidding him lay his head on her knee, she points out to him the roads to

heaven, paradise, purgatory, hell, and the castle which is hers

And þe kynges of this Countree.¹

She would rather be hanged and drawn than that the king should know what has passed between her and Thomas. For this reason, possibly, she enjoins Thomas, when they come to the castle, to answer none but her. Thomas now finds that the lady is as fair as at first. They proceed to the castle, which is somewhat fully described. After a certain time spent there, Thomas is told by his love that he must return to Eldon hill. He protests, saying he has been in the castle only three days; but is told that the time is three years instead. The fiend is about to "fetch his fee" from "this folk," and Thomas, being "mekill mane and hende," is likely to be chosen. Back once more at the Eldon tree, Thomas begs for a token as she turns to leave him, that he may say he has spoken with her.

"To harpe, or carpe, whare-so þou gose,
Thomas, þou sall hafe þe chose sothely,"

And he saide, "harpyng kepe j none;
ffor tonge es chefe of mynstralsye."

"If þou will spelle, or tales telle,
Thomas, þou sall neuer lesyng lye."

Not yet satisfied, he begs her to remain and tell him of some ferly. The rest of the poem is composed of the predictions which the lady utters in response to this request, often repeated. Finally she leaves Thomas, with a promise to meet him at Huntley banks.

In this story the MSS. substantially agree.² The Lansdowne has two additional passages in Fytt I. The first,

¹ Neither here nor elsewhere in the poem are elves, fairies, or Elf-land named.

² The Cambridge MS. makes Thomas's stay *seven* years.

lines 141–156, represents Thomas as thinking the “loathly lady” was the devil, and as being rebuked for this thought. The passage is, as Murray says (p. lxxii), unworthy, and is awkwardly interpolated, for lines 153–4 give a clumsy rendering of a thought immediately repeated in its proper place, line 159. The other passage is one (lines 237–252) in which, after reaching the other world, Thomas inquires why the lady lost her beauty on Eldon hill, and is told that the double change of form somehow keeps the knowledge of her misdeed from the king.

Distinct as the romance is from the prophecies which follow it, it is closely linked in structure. The first fytt closes with a “derne” saying about a falcon, and the lady’s stereotyped formula (used later again and again) of farewell. Thomas’s request for a token and its answer appear in the opening of the second fytt, and the first words of prophecy are made to follow very naturally from this. And at the close of the third fytt, in spite of the amount of very different material which has intervened, the relations of Thomas and the lady are not forgotten; Thomas weeps at parting, and she promises to meet him again. Further than this the prophetic fyttts need not detain us, except that we may recur to the fact that they contain at least two passages—one apparently relating to 1295, the other to 1333—which seem to have been independent earlier prophecies.

One very curious and somewhat puzzling feature of this poem is the change of person before alluded to. For the first seventy-two lines the story is told in the first person; then the third appears, with Thomas as subject. In line 276 the first person is used again, but only for the moment. “In the prophecies from line 317 to 672 the speeches of Thomas and the lady are merely quoted without even so much as an introductory ‘he said’ or ‘she said,’ so that

nothing can be determined as to the professed narrator" (Murray, p. xxiv). The conclusion, as Murray has pointed out (*loc. cit.*), is distinctly of the third person, in spirit as well as in form.

"Of swilke an hird mane wold j here
pat couth Me telle of swilke ferly," etc.

Brandl's explanation (Brandl, p. 13) that by the change of person the reader is bewildered and so brought to the proper state of mind for receiving prophecies must, I think, be rejected as far-fetched. A more plausible view is that the writer of the poem used as one of his sources, but did not entirely assimilate, an earlier story in the first person; or that the present romance is, as a whole, merely a redaction of one in the first person. The motive for change of person is readily conjectured: the poem is to be given in the third person that the impressive name of Thomas the Rhymer may be thoroughly understood to belong to it. It is even possible that the original poet, beginning by convention in the first person, may have turned to the third to draw attention to the name of Thomas;¹ but this view offers no explanation of the third person at line 276. The exact significance of these changes we cannot, however, determine without further study of the material and form of the poem. As for the reference in lines 83 and 123 to an older "storye," if it be not, as Brandl thinks (p. 14), a mere literary device, it would tend to confirm the hypothesis of an earlier work used as source for all or part of the romance.

The opening lines of the romance—the very lines which

¹ Cf. Adam Davy's fourth and fifth *Dreams*; especially the fourth, E. E. T. S., No. 69, pp. 14, 16. Here we have vacillation from one person to the other, but nothing like the unexpected momentary lapse of line 276.

are characterized by the use of the first person—deserve separate consideration. If one were to read them without knowledge of the story to follow, one would doubtless suppose them to form the induction to a vision of some sort. We find a conventional opening in the first person, with a definite date for the narrative—"this endres day"—the usual walk on a May morning, the usual position of the hero—lying under a tree. We miss the statement that sleep and a dream came upon him. But the apparition of a lady is just what one might expect in a vision. The "season-motif," to be sure, appears in romances with no visionary character,¹ but in connection with the *walk* and the use of the *first person*, it seems to belong distinctly to visions. Ladies, again, of necessity, appear in many stories and lays.² In other stories, too, we may have the sleep under a tree (as in *Sir Orfeo*); but not usually in connection with the walk and the first person.³ It is the combination of all these elements—the specified date, the May morning, with singing birds, etc., the walk, the use of the

¹ For use of the season-motif in poems not recounting visions, see *Richard Cœur de Lion*, Part II (in Weber's *Metrical Romances*, vol. II); *Heuline and Eglantine* (Le Grand, *Fabliaux*, tr. by G. L. Way, vol. II); *The Testament of Cresseid*, etc.

² And sometimes *fairies* appear when one has been sleeping under certain trees. Cf. *Tydorel* (*Romania*, VIII, 67); *Sir Orfeo*, in which Heurodys, lying under an *ympe-tree*, visits *fairyland in a dream*, just as she is the next day compelled to do in reality; *Tamlane*, version G 26, K 14 (Child, *Ballads*, I, 350, IV, 456); Child, *Ballads*, I, 340, III, 505; G. L. Kittredge, *Am. Jour. Phil.*, VII, 190. Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (London, William Tegg), p. 125: "Sleeping on a fairy mount, within which the fairy court happened to be held for a time, was a very ready mode of obtaining a passage for Elfland." In the conventional vision, however, the tree seems to be merely a part of the "May morning" machinery. In going to sleep out of doors one naturally looks for shade. In *Thomas of Erceuldoune*, perhaps we have the two conceptions united.

³ The first person and the sleep appear in the ballad of *Tamlane*.

first person, and the appearance of a lady—which seems typical of the visions.¹ The lady, too, if we take into account the prophetic fytts, is by no means the ordinary fay of romance. On the contrary, she does just what the lady of a vision should do; she imparts instruction. Or, to put the matter in another way, Thomas knows nothing about the future of himself; he is a passive recipient of knowledge, like the seer of any vision.

Analysis of the poem, then, brings to light inconsistent if not disparate elements within it: a prophecy apparently English in sympathy, and dating from 1295; a prophecy perhaps written and circulated to encourage the Scotch before the battle of Halidon Hill; a vision induction in the first person; and traces of an older “storye,” appearing

¹On the vision-type see Langlois, *Origines et Sources du Roman de la Rose*, pp. 56, 57; Triggs, edition of Lydgate's *Assembly of Gods*, pp. lv f; and Schick's Introduction to *The Temple of Glas*, cxviii ff. On the season-motif, see Triggs, *Assembly of Gods*, liii. On the dating of visions and other poems, see C. G. Osgood's Introduction to *Pearl*, p. xvi (Boston, 1906). For visions opening with the season-motif, the walk, and the sleep: *The Vision of Piers Ploughman*; the *Parlement of the Three Ages*; *Winnere and Wastour*; *Death and Life* in the Percy Folio ms.; Douglas's *Prologue* to the “13th” book of the *Æneid*; Dunbar's *Golden Targe*; Henryson's *Prologue* to his *Moral Fables*. Cf. also the late and very curious *Armonye of Byrdes* (Hazlitt's *Early Popular Poetry*, III, 187), in which, though there is no vision, there is an induction in the conventional style; indeed the whole is a sort of apotheosis of the May morning motif and its singing birds. For visions without the walk and the outdoor description, though often with mention of the season: Lydgate's *Assembly of Gods* and *Temple of Glas*; Dunbar's *Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*, *Amendis to the Telyouris and Sowtaris* and *The Tenyeit Freir of Tungland*; *The Romaunt of the Rose* and *The Boke of the Duchesse* (in which the May morning description appears in the dream); *The Parlement of Foules*; *The Hous of Fame*; Adam Davy's *Visions*; *Boethius*. For ladies of one sort or another in visions: *Boethius*, *Pearl*, *Death and Life*, etc. For the first person in visions, any one of the above.

first (line 83) just after the shifting of the narrative from first to third person. The mere mechanical structure of *Thomas of Erceldoune* suggests at once that its author drew from various sources.

SOURCES OF THE ROMANCE.

There are several stories, any one of which, were it not for the existence of the others, might somewhat plausibly be affirmed to be the source of *Thomas of Erceldoune*.

A. The general machinery of the poem is paralleled, as Brandl notes (p. 131), in an old Scotch prophecy found in a MS. of the fourteenth century.¹ The poem begins

Als y yod on a Mounday
bytwene Wyltinden and Walle
Me ane aftere brade waye
ay litel man y mette withalle.

The "little man" is grotesque in appearance, but of great strength. The narrator asks where he dwells, and receives the reply,

My wonige stede ful wel is dygh
nou sone thou salt se at hame.

Terrified, as it seems, the other says,

For Godes mith,
lat me forth myn erand gane.

But he must go. After a trying journey—

"Stinted us broke no becke,
ferlicke me thouth hu so mouth be"—

they go "in at a gate" to a castle or court where lords and

¹ Child, *Ballads*, I, 333; Langtoft's *Chronicle* (ed. Wright), II, 452 ff.

ladies are enjoying themselves. After the brief description of the place there is a break. The narrator goes on to report a "tale told on a Wednesday"—that is, a conversation in which he interrogates "a mody barn," a "merry man" about the outcome of the wars, and receives answers couched in the usual zoölogical figures.

Here we have the walk; the encounter with a richly-dressed supernatural person;¹ the command, reluctantly obeyed, to follow to a castle; the difficult journey; and the prophecies given through question and answer.² But the story is bald and uninteresting compared with that of *Thomas of Erceldoune*, and the prophecies are much less skilfully combined with it. Even if the ground-plan of the romance were derived from this poem, its details must evidently be sought elsewhere.³

B. The Merlin cycle offers another tempting parallel, combining romance with prophecy much more organically than "Als y yod on a Mounday." I have already pointed out the general similarity between the positions of Merlin

¹ See stanzas i and v of "Als y yod."

² Cf. many of the Irish prophecies cited by O'Curry: *MS. Materials of Ancient Irish History*, pp. 383 ff.

³ "Als y yod on a Mounday," being a Scotch prophecy, would doubtless be available as a source to a Scotch or Northern poet of the fourteenth century. And though it appears in a MS. of the fourteenth century, it may quite possibly in one form or another be even older. Brandl points out a similarity of phrase between line 33 of the prophecy,

Wel still I stod als did the stane,

and line 233 of *Thomas of Erceldoune*,

Thomas still als stane he stude.

But the phrase is not uncommon. We have it in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (line 242):

& al stouned at his steuen, & ston-stil seten.

and Thomas in popular thought. The two further resemble each other in being not knights, like the heroes of most fairy-love tales, but prophets. And in the romance there is a coherent story, suggesting the imprisonment of Merlin. Thomas of Erceldoune loves a *damoisele cacheresse*, who detains him in an other-world castle. Of the Welsh prophet we read: "Essentially the story places Merlin among the many heroes of old who fell victims to fairy blandishments, and were transported by other-world agencies to a land without return. . . . The story of his disappearance from the world was popular in the highest degree."¹ The general likeness of the two stories, and the fact that the universally known Merlin material could be readily used by any writer, suggests that the author of our romance may have had Merlin in mind. There are, however, some distinctions to draw. The correspondence of the underground journey with the cave is not of great importance, for this was a very common way of reaching the other world.² The fairy-love in *Thomas of Erceldoune* is uniformly friendly. Though forced to enter Eldon Hill against his will, Thomas finds himself happy in fairy-land. (In this particular his experience is more typical than Merlin's.) Even his banishment to earth was a distinct act of kindness. The love of Merlin is treacherous and cruel; she decoys Merlin into the cave and imprisons him there. Thomas, so far as the romance testifies, is an ordinary man.³ He has no prophetic power

¹ Lucy Allen Paton, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance* (Radcliffe College Monographs, No. 3), p. 224.

² Cf. Wright, *St. Patrick's Purgatory* (London, 1844), pp. 81 ff., 85; *Am. Jour. Phil.*, VII, 194 ff.; the story of Oisín (Miss Paton's *Fairy Mythology*, p. 215); Mapes, *De Nug. Cur.*, p. 16; Giraldus Cambrensis, *It. Kam.*, liber I, ch. 8; *Tam Lin*, I, stanza 31 (Child, *Ballads*, I, 354); *Sir Orfeo*.

³ The popular stories of the nineteenth century, representing Thomas as being taught by the fairies in childhood recall, of course, the myth concerning Merlin's origin. These stories may or may not be as old as our poem.

without the teaching of the fairy queen, no necromantic arts to impart to his lady-love. The only striking point of contact, then, is the love of the prophet-hero for a huntress. But to have the fairy lady ride is common enough.¹ Even if horn and hounds be added to her equipment, through the suggestion of some Merlin tale, there is nothing to show that the whole romance is based on such a story of Merlin. Later I shall have occasion to show that the huntress may have entered the story in another way.

Nor does Merlin the Wild offer a more satisfactory parallel. In the *Vita Merlini*, Merlin Sylvestris, or the Wild, instead of being carried away to the other world, lives the life of a wild beast in the woods. He resembles Thomas in being eventually restored. But here again, Merlin is prophet independently of his relations with the fay. Before his madness

Rex erat et vates: Demetarumque superbis
Jura dabat populis, ducibusque futura canebat.²

Again, too, the fairy love of Merlin is unkind and treacherous. The incident of the fruit in *Thomas of Erceldoune* may indeed suggest the poisoned apples which drove Merlin mad.³ It might be maintained that the fruit forbidden Thomas was of the same character, and conceivably the original reading may have suggested madness instead of punishment in hell as the penalty of eating. But the more obvious explanation, if we are to postulate any older version, or the influence of any traditional conception, is the danger

¹ Child, *Ballads*, I, 339.

² *Vita Merlini*, lines 21, 22.

³ Brandl, p. 23 f. Stephens in his *Literature of the Kymry* (p. 232) shows that the name of Merlin is associated with apples, but gives nothing to throw light on the relationship of Thomas and Merlin.

of eating anything in the other world.¹ The points of similarity between the stories of Thomas and Merlin Sylvestris are only, then, that each contains a story of fruit *better not eaten*, and that, unlike Merlin Ambrosius, both heroes are restored to their homes.

C. Another correspondence which has impressed some readers is that between *Thomas of Erceldoune* and Tannhäuser. In her *Legends of the Wagner Drama*, Miss Weston speaks of a connection between the two not yet worked out, and quotes Simrock as saying that Ercildoune is equivalent to Hörselberg.² Fiske, in his *Myths and Myth-makers* (p. 40) draws the parallel with less hesitation, and gives the same etymology. I shall try to point out certain facts which must be taken into account in any examination of this theory. In each story, it is true, the hero—a poet who really lived in the thirteenth century—is lured away to an abode within the hills by a supernatural woman or goddess. “Thomas remains with her for *seven*³ years (a period also assigned by a Flemish version of the legend to Tannhäuser’s stay”).⁴ But the number seven is by no means peculiar to this incident; the time of any sojourn in the other world would naturally be expressed in threes or sevens. Other features found in these two stories are common also to many

¹ As to eating in the other world, see Child, *Ballads*, I, 322; Hartland, *Science of Fairy Tales*, ch. III; Meyer and Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, I, 299; Scott, *Demonology and Witchcraft*, p. 125. It is surely an exasperating predicament in which Thomas finds himself. His complaint of hunger leads to his being conducted to the arbor full of fruit, and then he is forbidden to touch or taste.

² Simrock says: “Auch erinnert allerding’s Hörselberg an Ercildoune.”—*Deutsche Mythologie* (ed. 1874), p. 386. He also compares Thomas with Tannhäuser (*ibid.*, p. 330).

³ In the Cambridge ms. and the ballads.

⁴ Weston, *Leg. Wagner Drama*, p. 351.

tales.¹ The fact that both heroes were poets need not lead us to conclude that somewhat similar accounts of them have the same root. On the contrary, supposing that the basis of both stories were the same, it is a most singular coincidence that it should come to be associated with two poets, of different countries, who were contemporaries. If the legend is much older than either of the two poets, and Ercildoune is really Hørselberg, the application of the myth to two contemporary poets is yet more singular. This supposed equivalence of the two names seems to be the clinching argument for the identity of the two stories. But what does this imply? That the name Ercildoune was given in remote heathen days,² or shortly thereafter, and that connected with it was a tradition of a goddess or fay luring away a human lover, which lingered till the thirteenth century and then attached itself in Scotland as in Germany to a local poet. If this were true, should we not expect to find some evidence of the existence of the story before the days of Thomas, some ballad or tale? It may be that such evidence exists. Until it is brought forward, however, it is not necessary to connect Thomas with Tannhäuser.

D. A theory which stubbornly reappears is that *Ogier the Dane* was the original of Thomas in the romance. Professor Child (*Ballads*, I, 319) states this view emphati-

¹On the underground abode, see *supra*, p. 388. For the fairy love, see Mapes, *De Nug. Cur.*, pp. 70, 77, 80 f.; Gir. Cam. It. Kam., I, ch. 5, 10; the story of Owain in the *Mabinogion*; *Cuchulín's Sick-bed*; the story of Oisín (Miss Paton, pp. 215 and 243); Merlin stories; lays of Lanval, Graellent, etc.; numerous ballads in Child, *Ballads*, I.

²If, indeed, it is possible to regard "Ercil" as cognate with "Hørsel" in case we derive the latter from *Asen*, or even from *Hör-seel* (Simrock, *Deut. Myth.*, p. 386).

cally, and he is followed by F. F. Henderson (*Scottish Vernacular Literature*, p. 23). The surviving versions of Ogier's other-world experiences belong to the fourteenth century and later, and have, indeed, not been published in full. (Apparently, however, there were earlier versions.)¹ The story as it is known from extracts and summaries is thus outlined by Professor Child :

"Six fairies made gifts to Ogier at his birth. By the favor of five he was to be the strongest, the bravest, the most successful, the handsomest, the most susceptible of knights: Morgan's gift was that, after a long and fatiguing career of glory, he should live with her at her castle of Avalon, in the enjoyment of a still longer youth and never wearying pleasures. When Ogier had passed his hundredth year, Morgan took measures to carry out her promise. She had him wrecked, while he was on a voyage to France, on a loadstone rock conveniently near to Avalon, which Avalon is a little way this side of the terrestrial Paradise. In due course he comes to an orchard, and there he eats an apple, which affects him so peculiarly that he looks for nothing but death. He turns to the east, and sees a beautiful lady, magnificently attired. He takes her for the Virgin; she corrects his error, and announces herself as Morgan the Fay. She puts a ring on his finger which restores his youth, and then places a crown on his head which makes him forget all the past. For two hundred years Ogier lived in such delights as no worldly being can imagine, and the two hundred years seemed to him but twenty; Christendom was then in danger, and even Morgan thought his presence was required in the world. The crown being taken from his head the memory of the past revived, and with it the desire to return to France. He was sent back by the fairy, properly provided, vanquished the foes of Christianity in a short space, and after a time was brought back by Morgan the Fay to Avalon."

This does indeed, at first sight, seem to offer more correspondences with our poem than any story hitherto considered. Morgan's gift to Ogier at birth may *possibly* be compared with the popular tradition of Thomas's education in fairy-land. To the romance Ogier shows a closer parallelism. In the Ogier story, as in the romance, we have a journey to

¹ Miss Paton, *Fairy Mythology*, p. 74.

the other world, in this case without a preliminary appearance of the fay. Ogier eats fruit with dire results, as Thomas would have done had he not been prevented. (Yet it is not clear whether this is not part of Morgan's plan.) A beautiful lady appears, whom Ogier, like Thomas, takes for the Virgin. The country of Avalon is near the terrestrial Paradise; and in *Thomas of Erceldoune* the ways to both Paradise and the unnamed country we may call fairy-land were pointed out. Ogier sojourns, like Thomas, for a time that seems much shorter than it is. Like Thomas, too, he is sent back to earth; not, after much insistence, permitted to go. Then there is a final return of the hero to the other-world, paralleled by the *popular* story of Thomas. There is, surely, a general similarity between the two stories, or cycles.

On the other hand, certain details in these romances are quite dissimilar. Ogier is not a prophet but a knight; he is claimed by the fay at birth; the mode of his journey to the other-world is altogether unlike Thomas's;¹ the fairy-lady appears to him at the end, not at the beginning of this journey; a ring of youth and a crown of forgetfulness are given him.

What of the details which are alike? Fairy fruits are not peculiar to these two stories.² Fays are elsewhere mistaken for the Virgin.³ The connection of Avalon and

¹ Except that both have to traverse water. But Thomas, after first entering the hill, *wades* in water to his knee. Ogier is transported in a ship which seems to be a variant of the magic boat employed by many enamoured fairies. See Paton, *Fairy Mythology*, p. 16, note 1.

² See *supra*, p. 390. It seems to have been overlooked that though the apple—the fruit associated with Merlin and Ogier—grows in the arbōr to which Thomas is led, the fruit which Thomas attempts to pluck is not specified.

³ Cf. Sébillot, *Contes Populaires de la H. Bretagne* (Paris, 1880), II, 31; *Hist. Litt.*, xxx, 93; Child, *Ballads*, I, 319, note; III, 504. (References given by Miss Paton, p. 77.)

of the fairy castle with the terrestrial Paradise, though certainly an interesting correspondence, is to be regarded in each case simply as the result of the widespread confusion of Christian and fairy other-worlds.¹ Avalon, in the Ogier story, is perhaps placed near the terrestrial Paradise to emphasize the felicity of life there. In *Thomas of Erceeldoune* the poet evidently wishes to give a complete view of other-world regions, doubtless, as Brandl suggests (p. 24), in order to establish the authority of Thomas by ascribing to him a knowledge of regions forbidden other living men. Another point of similarity—the illusion concerning the lapse of time in fairyland—is a mere commonplace.² Such resemblances evidently give very slight ground for derivation of one romance from the other. On the other hand, in the case of that somewhat remarkable feature, the definite dismissal of the hero by his fairy-love, the reasons given in the two stories are quite different. Ogier is spared for a time to the needs of Christendom; Thomas is sent back to earth that he may escape the tiend to hell.³ To sum up, the points of similarity between *Ogier* and *Thomas of Erceeldoune* are mainly from stock fairy material, and there are important differences between them. We must search elsewhere for the main source of our romance.

E. None of the stories thus far examined throws any

¹ Cf. Wright, *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, p. 82.

² Cf. Mapes, *De Nug. Cur.*, p. 16; Wright, *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, p. 93; Baring Gould, *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, p. 219; Miss Paton's *Fairy Mythology*, pp. 2, 69, 211, n. 5, 215; Hartland's *Science of Fairy Tales*, chs. 7, 8, 9, *passim*; *Rom.*, VIII, 51 ff.; Sébillot, *Contes Pop.*, II, 36; Meyer and Nutt, I, 143.

³ For the tiend to hell, see Lady Wilde, *Ancient Legends of Ireland*, I, 70; Scott, *Bord. Mins.* (Edinburgh, 1861), II, 325; Child, *Ballads*, v, 215; *Tamlane*, versions A, B, C, D, G, H, I, J; Scott, *Demonology and Witchcraft*, p. 127. This seems to be distinctly a folk-lore conception, and altogether dissonant with the Ogier material.

light on the "loathly-lady" incident in *Thomas*, the gruesome transformation of the fay. Professor Child, indeed, holding that we have here the Ogier story in disguise, says that the episode has properly no place in the poem (*Ballads*, I, 320). That it does probably belong to the story is shown by the firm way in which it is joined to the rest, and by the fact that it appears *twice*, and at suitable points. In any case, however, we must look further for a source from which the incident could have been derived, either detached or as an integral part of a longer story. Brandl, evidently regarding it as an essential part of the romance, thinks that the poet borrowed from the *Anturs of Arthur* and from some folk-tale resembling the story of Meilerius told by Giraldus Cambrensis. Of the latter, he says (p. 20):

"Mit dieser als volkssage überlieferten darstellung ist die unsers dichters in wesentlichen punkten, besonders in der verwandlung der schönheit und in der verleihung dauernder weissagungsgabe, jedenfalls verwandter als mit den elfenliebschaften, welche manche kunst-dichter erzählen."

Later (p. 21), he sums up his views :

"Nach alle dem halte ich es für das wahrscheinlichste, dass unser dichter den kern seiner einkleidung aus mündlichen quellen, teilweise mit anlehnung an Aunt. Arth. und die genannte altschottische prophezeiung,¹ geschöpft hat."

To consider first the *Anturs of Arthur*. Brandl sees in Guinevere's mother a strong resemblance to the fairy-love of *Thomas* :

"Der prophezeiende geist, allerdings keine elfin, war auch vorher eine königin und *the fayereste of alle* gewesen und dann ebenfalls durch liebenssünden schwarz, nackt und scheusslich geworden."

The lady is certainly "keine elfin," being simply a ghost

¹ "Als y yod on a Mounday."

modeled after that in *The Trentals of St. Gregory*, and, like her prototype, returning to earth to give her child a message of religious purport.¹ The association of a frightful hag with prophecy is, of course, a trait strongly suggestive of *Thomas of Erceldoune*. But the conditions of the transformation in the two poems are quite dissimilar. The mother of Guinevere is a mortal who has died; she is undergoing punishment—an idea absent from our romance²—and can be restored only through masses and prayers. No lover of hers appears in the story, and she bestows no gift of true-speaking.

The minor correspondences pointed out by Brandl (pp. 21, 22) are without great significance. Brandl connects the "grenwode spraye" of *Thomas of Erceldoune* with the laurel in stanza VI of the *Anturs*, as well as with the *ympe-tre* of *Sir Orfeo*. Plainly, he regards them all as magic trees, exposing one to the fairies' influence.³ But as the *Anturs* can hardly be interpreted as fairy material, we must make exception of the laurel. Nor has Thomas's blunder in mistaking the fairy lady for the Virgin any necessary relation with Gawain's conjuring the ghost by the name of Christ.⁴ The very natural figure and play upon sound in line 171 of *Thomas*:

¹ See W. H. Schofield, *Eng. Lit.*, p. 220. A reading of the two poems would seem sufficient to demonstrate the derivation of the *Anturs* from *The Trentals of St. Gregory*. In the latter, the Pope's mother comes to her son at mass, a grisly apparition; she explains that she is in torment for her sins of adultery, and begs that masses be said for her soul. In the *Anturs* it is Guinevere's mother who returns to make similar confession and to warn her daughter, and receives a promise of masses to be said.

² Except in the Lansdowne ms., lines 151, 152.

³ Cf. *supra*, p. 384, note; Miss Paton, *Fairy Mythology*, p. 52, note 1.

⁴ *Anturs*, XI. Cf. the second appearance of the lady in *The Trentals of St. Gregory*, where she is addressed as Queen of heaven.

Whare it was dirke als mydnyght myrke,

though possibly copied from stanza VI of the *Anturs*,

The daye waxe als dirke,
Als it were mydnyght myrke,

might well be either original with the poet or proverbial. There is little reason, then, for assuming indebtedness to the *Anturs* on the part of our poet, though he may, of course, have caught up a detail here and there.

A more complete parallel with *Thomas of Erceldoune* is to be found in the story of Meilerius recounted by Gerald of Wales (*It. Kam.*, Liber I, ch. 5) in which, as Brandl points out, the hag appears in connection with prophecy and the gift of true-speaking. Of Meilerius Gerald tells us;

“Nocte quadam, scilicet Ramis palmarum, puellam diu ante adamatam, sicut forma præferebat, obviam habens loco amæno, et ut videbatur opportuno, desideratis amplexibus atque deliciis cum indulsisset, statim, loco puellæ formosæ, formam quamdam villosam, hispidam et hirsutam, adeoque enormiter deformem invenit, quod in ipso ejusdem aspectu dementire cœpit et insanire. Cumque pluribus id annis ei durasset, optatam sanitatem recuperavit. Semper tamen cum spiritibus immundis magnam et mirandam familiaritatem habens, eosdem vivendo, cognoscendo, colloquendo, propriisque nominibus singulos nominando, ipsorum ministerio plerumque futura prædicebat. Videbat autem eos fere semper pedites et expeditos, et quasi sub forma venatorum, cornu a collo suspensum habentes, et vere venatores non ferarum tamen nec animalium sed animarum. Quoties autem falsum coram ipso ab aliquo dicebatur, id statim agnoscebat, videbat enim super linguam mentientis dæmonem quasi salientem et exultantem. Librum quoque mendosum, et vel falso scriptum, vel falsum etiam in se continentem inspiciens, statim, licet illiteratus omnino fuisset, ad locum mendacii digitum ponebat.”

Here, for the first time, we find an analogue to that most remarkable feature of Thomas's history, his adventure with

a fay who assumes a "loathly" form.¹ The difficulty of interpretation is greatly enhanced by the thoroughly ecclesiastical tone of Gerald's narrative. If, however, we are to regard the story as popular in any sense, and not merely as a figment of Gerald's brain, we shall doubtless be justified in translating it into the language of popular fairy-lore. In view of the widespread tendency to associate fairies and demons,² and of the features common to Meilerius and many fairy tales—the hero's love for a supernatural woman, a change of form, familiarity on the part of the hero with supernatural beings who bestow peculiar powers—the transition is easy. Apparently, considering the material in this light, we have come upon the track of that ancient and widely known story of which the most familiar embodiment is the *Wife of Bath's Tale*. Meilerius, as I have said, offers the first true parallel to the fairy in *Thomas of Erceldoune*, who loses—or lays aside—her beauty.³ Moreover, Meilerius and *Thomas* vary in the same way from the typical loathly-lady story, for in both the lady is at first beautiful, is wooed by the hero instead of wooing him, and becomes frightful after a love-scene.

Some essential features of the loathly-maiden theme which are absent from Meilerius, at least in Gerald's meagre version, are preserved in *Thomas*. The loathly-lady properly tests

¹ Compare the *puella* in the Meilerius story, "villosam, hispidam, et hirsutam," with the daughter of King Underwaves, with her "hair down to her heels." Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, III, 403 ff.

² Cf. *infra*, p. 406, note 2.

³ The lady of the earliest transformed-hag stories could hardly be termed a fay. (See Whitley Stokes, *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*, *Academy*, xli, 399). But in the later development of the legend, at least in that form into which the idea of enchantment has not entered—as *The Wife of Bath's Tale*—the heroine seems to take on the nature of the fairy-ladies of Celtic romance.

the hero, recovers her beauty if he meets the test, and bestows on him happiness or some more tangible gift.¹ The fairy-love of Thomas tests him, while wearing her loathly guise, by insisting on compliance with hard conditions, and rewards him by resuming her beauty. Perhaps it would be fanciful to interpret Thomas's words,

Here my trouthe j will the plyghte,
Whethir þou will in heuene or helle,

as yielding sovereignty to the lady in the fashion demanded in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, especially since they are spoken before the fay's unpleasant metamorphosis. The tongue that will not lie, however, may be analogous to the gifts bestowed in certain other loathly-lady stories.² The legend given by Gerald, so far as it suggests any explanation of the truth-testing power of Meilerius, seems to ascribe it simply to commerce with unclean spirits—in popular language, probably, fairies.

In various other particulars *Meilerius* corresponds more or less closely with our romance. The *puella* of the tale, if not, like Thomas's love, a huntress herself, seems to be associated with spirits who appear as hunters. The madness of Meilerius may be compared with the other-world sojourn of Thomas, as well as with the insanity of Merlin the Wild. In one respect, indeed, it more nearly resembles the former, since both Thomas and Meilerius acquired prophetic power through this absence (or madness).³ Like

¹ On the meaning of the loathly-lady theme, see Maynadier's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, p. 160.

² Cf. the story of Daire's Sons (*Academy*, xli, 399), and the "Daughter of King Underwaves" (Campbell, *Pop. Tales*, iii, 403). But fairy ladies of every sort as a rule bestow gifts on their lovers.

³ O'Curry remarks that "The word Baile, which means madness, distraction, or ecstasy, is the ancient Gaedhlic name for a Prophecy." (*MS. Materials*, p. 385.) Cf. Gir. Cam., *Descriptio Kambriæ*, Liber i, ch. 16.

both Thomas and Merlin Sylvestris, Meilerius is restored. Finally, as has already been pointed out, the supernatural beings of Gerald's story endow a mortal with prophetic knowledge, and with something comparable to the tongue that will not lie. Of these common details the huntress, and still more the other-world sojourn, belongs to stock fairy-material. The permanent restoration of the hero to his home is more unusual. The gifts of prophetic knowledge and of true speaking are still less commonly met with outside the Merlin cycle, and in combination with the hag story—which usually deals in rewards of a material nature—would seem to be unique.¹

All in all, the general parallelism between *Thomas of Erceldoune* and Gerald's tale of Meilerius, considered in the light of the typical "loathly-lady" story, suggests, on the one hand, that Meilerius is a rationalized and moralized version of a story about a fairy-love who bestows prophetic gifts, and, on the other hand, that Thomas is largely based on some story very similar, in theme and order of events, to that of Meilerius.² Between the typical transformed-hag

¹ For truth in general as an object of concern to fairies see *Hist. Litt.*, xxvi, 105; Meyer and Nutt, i, 190, 191, 217; a story from Gir. Cam. cited by Miss Paton (p. 129) of lovers of truth who lived underground; and these words from the *Sickbed of Cuchullin* (cited in another connection by Prof. Kittredge, *Am. Jour. Phil.*, vii, 197): "a country bright and noble, in which is not spoken falsehood or guile."

² These two points would seem to be established, even if the specifically "loathly-lady" details—the test of the hero and the lady's return to her beautiful form—never existed in *Meilerius*, and entered our romance from quite a different source. That the latter was very likely the case, is suggested at once by the fact that no unmistakable transformed-hag story, technically so called, seems to appear in Wales. Two folk-tales, of fiends assuming the guise of beautiful women, but in the end exhibiting their true nature, may be cited as of some interest here (Owen, *Welsh Folk-lore*, pp. 186 f,

story and *Meilerius*, *Thomas* occupies middle ground, retaining some traits of the former not to be discerned in Gerald's tale, yet resembling the latter in important and perhaps unique particulars.

Nor are the discrepancies between the two stories very significant. In *Meilerius*, it is true, some details of the *Thomas* story are lacking: the episode of the fruit, the underground journey, the vision of the ways to heaven, hell, etc., the enjoining of silence, the delusion as to the lapse of time. Some of these may very likely have been in the *Meilerius* story originally, if there was an earlier and more popular version in which a journey to the other world took the place of madness. At any rate, all but one (the roads to the different regions of the other world) belong to a stock fairy-material, and might be introduced into any story of fays.

To show that these two stories are related is easier than to demonstrate derivation of one from the other. The fact that we have the story of *Meilerius* from an ecclesiastical source rather strengthens any supposition in favor of its connection with *Thomas*; for in spite of Gerald's (or some one's) decidedly non-popular improvements—the demons who betrayed the lying book or man, the hunters after souls, etc.—the resemblance between *Meilerius* and *Thomas* is still strong. We can hardly suppose, however, that the poet of our romance drew directly from Gerald. His treatment of the material is far more in the spirit of popular fairy-love, and, as we have seen, is in some ways closer to the original meaning of the loathly-lady theme. Certainly, if

and Sikes, *British Goblins*, pp. 193 ff.). The second presents some points of likeness to *T. of E.*: the lady insists on the hero's following her, at the same time implying that her beauty may sometime depart. But the order of events is different, and the theme of the story is plainly not test and reward, but exorcism of a devil.

he was by chance a reader of Gerald, and took a suggestion from his book, he reshaped the tale with other stories in mind.

Of a popular legend in England and Wales, to be postulated as the source used by both Gerald and our poet, there is no satisfactory evidence. Brandl, indeed, remarks (p. 20):

“Doch will ich noch nicht behaupten dass er [the author of our romance] die geschichte gerade bei Giraldus gelesen oder in Caerleon gehört habe; denn derartige märchenzüge sind in England überhaupt seit dem 12n jahrhundert als populär nachzuweisen.”

But as the examples from British writers which he proceeds to give want the loathly-lady episode, they can hardly—except through the fairy-love—serve to connect *Meilerius* and *Thomas of Erceldoune*. Other stories which we may cite, such as *Dame Ragnell*, *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*, and *The Daughter of King Underwaves*, though they demonstrate the widespread popularity of the loathly-lady, down even to our own day,¹ lack the incidents preceding the transformation of the fay to a hag, and are quite unconnected with prophecy.

So far as the prophetic elements in the story are concerned, there seems to be nothing to serve as link between *Meilerius* and *Thomas of Erceldoune*. It may even be that the correspondence of the two stories is mere coincidence, the result of the tendency seen throughout the British Isles to

¹ “The Daughter of King Underwaves” was written down from an old woman’s recital in 1860 (Campbell, *Pop. Tales*, III, 403). The latest appearance of the hag seems to be that in Campbell’s *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1900), cited by Maynadier, *Wife of Bath’s Tale*, p. 194. It is singular enough that the loathly-lady theme, so popular in other forms, and so natural a magnet for the equally popular stories of disenchantment, should have dropped out of the ballad *Thomas* altogether.

clothe prophecy with romance.¹ Or, the Meilerius material as found in Gerald may simply have been attracted into the Thomas story (which told how a prophet was instructed by the fairy-queen) through the common idea of prophetic knowledge imparted to a mortal, and may have been worked over to conform more nearly with other loathly-damsel stories.² At any rate, if a *popular* legend of a hag associated with prophecy existed antecedent to Gerald's account, and lingered in Wales or Scotland till it was used by our poet, all traces of that legend are lost.

If we attempt to show a relationship between *Thomas of Erceldoune* and *Meilerius* solely through the loathly-damsel incident, we find one English poem which at first sight seems to promise a vague connection between the two, since it gives the same sequence of events in the early part of the story as *Thomas* and *Meilerius*. In the ballad of *The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter*,³ as in *Thomas*, the heroine at first is beautiful and is wooed by the hero; they go on a journey; the lady becomes loathly (disagreeable to deal with); she recovers her beauty (turns out to be of noble rank). Again, *Thomas*, *Meilerius* and the *Knight* resemble the *Wife of Bath's Tale* form of the hag-story in beginning the narrative with an incident of rape, but differ from it in

¹ On the vogue of prophecy in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and the forms under which it appeared, see Schofield, *Eng. Lit.*, pp. 367 f; Brandl, *T. of E.*, p. 12; O'Curry, *MS. Mat.*, pp. 383 ff.; Stephens, *Lit. of Kymry*, pp. 273, 275 ff.; Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*, I, 436-446.

² Cf. Maynadier, *Wife of Bath's Tale*, p. 161: The "resemblance of the story of Thomas to the incident of Meilyr, coupled with its northern location, may be due to a fusion of two legends—one of Welsh origin, the other of Scottish Gaelic—by a poet who recognized that they contained virtually the same incident."

³ For explanation of this ballad see Maynadier, *Wife of Bath's Tale*, pp. 260 ff.

making the woman of the opening scene the same one who undergoes the transformations of the story. Thus the three tales seem to form a group by themselves. But in the case of *The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter* the identification of the two women seems to be due to the ballad-writer's desire to simplify his material, joined with some misunderstanding of its nature. It is, moreover, intimately connected with a scene at court which has no counterpart in the other stories. And if the identity of the two women is not a common trait, neither is the change from beauty to ugliness, which depends upon it. *Meilerius* and *Thomas*, then, stand alone in containing this chain of incidents; a love-scene between a mortal and a beautiful woman, her transformation into an ugly hag, and the final bestowal, through her, of a gift. Moreover, in *The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter*, we have, as in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, the appeal to the king, and, as in most English versions of the loathly-lady story, relationship between the hero and the king's family. In lacking this group of background characters, *Thomas* and *Meilerius* are nearer the simplicity of the more primitive transformed-hag story.

Thus any attempt to trace relationship between *Thomas of Erceldoune* and *Meilerius* through any extant popular story of a hag, connected or not connected with prophecy, breaks down. If our poet made use of any popular version of the *Meilerius* material, that version is lost. At the same time, our examination has brought out more sharply the resemblances between the two stories; the opening love-scene, the loss of beauty, and the gifts of prophecy and of true-speaking. The author of our romance would seem to have known the *Meilerius* tale in some form. But the version which he knew was either much closer than Gerald's to the typical loathly-lady story, or was altered by him to conform more nearly to the type.

To sum up the points of resemblance which we have found between *Thomas of Erceldoune* and other stories. The fairy love is found in *Ogier*, *Tannhäuser* (a goddess here), *Merlin*, *Meilerius*; is connected with the hunt in *Merlin* (some versions) and *Meilerius*; she is taken for the Virgin in *Ogier*; she leads the hero to an underground dwelling in *Tannhäuser* and in some versions of the *Merlin* story. There is an episode connected with fruit in *Merlin the Wild* and in *Ogier*. The hero is deceived as to the passage of time in *Ogier*. He returns to earth or is restored to sanity in *Ogier*, *Tannhäuser*, *Merlin the Wild*, *Meilerius*, and "Als y yod on a Mounday." Prophetic knowledge or power is given by a supernatural person in "Als y yod" and *Meilerius*. Truth-telling is connected with this person in *Meilerius*.

Among all these stories more or less roughly corresponding to the story of *Thomas of Erceldoune*, it is evidently dangerous to pick out any one as the main source of the romance. Especially is it hazardous to base conclusions on stock incidents, such as the fairy love, unless they are associated with more unusual details. We may, however, consider these points established : that the author of *Thomas of Erceldoune* was not acquainted with the legend of *Tannhäuser*, or in any fundamental sense indebted to the story of *Ogier*, if indeed he knew it; that though, like every one else, he doubtless knew something of the *Merlin* cycle, he did not borrow from it in important particulars; that he very likely knew and possibly took a hint from "Als y yod on a Mounday;" and that he was pretty certainly acquainted with the typical "loathly-lady" story, and with some version of the *Meilerius* material, combining a transformed hag with prophecy and the gift of true-speaking.

F. The other-world elements in the story, recalling, as they do, that ancient and popular tradition of Christian

literature which found its supreme expression in the *Divine Comedy*, must be separately considered. In this poem the roads to heaven, hell, purgatory, paradise, and apparently fairyland (the country is not named), are pointed out. No distinction is made between Christian and popular or pagan conceptions; the two are placed side by side. The appearance of fairyland is readily accounted for by the nature of the heroine. The association of fairyland with hell, since both are frequently conceived as underground,¹ is natural enough. We often find, indeed, a *moral* association between the two, as in the *tiend* the fairies are obliged to pay.² On the other hand, fairyland, being a land of pleasure, is easily connected with the *terrestrial paradise*, as in *Ogier*. And given any one of the four—heaven, hell, purgatory, or paradise—the tendency would of course be to introduce the whole series.

The occurrence of this other-world material in a poem beginning with a conventional vision-induction suggests at first sight that there is some intimate connection between the two. We cannot, however, suppose that such an induc-

¹ For Paradise located in the *East*, see Wright, *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, pp. 92-3; Maundevile, ch. xxx. For hell and purgatory underground, Owayne Myles (*Englische Studien*, I, p. 100); *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, pp. 85, 94, 99, 102, 103; Becker, *Mediæval Visions of Heaven and Hell*, p. 58. For Fairyland underground, *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, pp. 81 ff.; Gir. Cam. *It. Kam.*, I, 8; Mapes, *De Nug. Cur.*, p. 16; *Sir Orfeo*; Meyer and Nutt, I, 174; Miss Paton, *Fairy Mythology*, p. 215.

² Scott (*Demonology and Witchcraft*, p. 126), speaks of a man who, for his sins, was condemned to wander with the fairies after his death. The easy transition from fairies to demons is doubtless illustrated (if my view of the material is correct) by the demons who attended Meilerius. It is shown again in Thomas's feeling (as reported by the Lansdowne ms., line 144) that the hag he sees in place of the lovely fay must be the devil. Cf. also Scott, *Bord. Mins.*, II, 291 ff.

tion as that of our poem would be used if the author's main purpose were to give a view of the world beyond.¹ Visions of heaven and hell were usually begun in other ways.² Though Owen Miles visits purgatory and paradise in the flesh, the seer of the vision generally falls into a trance, and there is no preliminary walk or season-motif.³ The conventions of the allegorical or moral vision and of the other-world vision were not the same,⁴ and the induction of our romance belongs to the former class.⁵ At the same time, the roads to heaven and hell, though here not the main feature of the vision, might very well be an element in it. If a prophet is to be taken to the other world that he may gain authority, why not make the most of the opportunity, and give him the importance, not only of one who has heard strange predictions in his dreams, but also of one who has seen all these unknown realms?⁶

¹ It is noteworthy that in *Thomas* we have only the *roads* to the different realms, with a brief characterization of each, but no description.

² Becker, *Mediæval Visions, passim*; *The Eleven Pains of Hell* (E. E. T. S., No. 49, p. 147); *In Diebus Dominicis* (E. E. T. S., No. 34, p. 41).

³ *Pearl* seems to partake of both the allegorical and the other-world vision, in form as well as in thought. See Schofield, *Nature and Fabric of the Pearl*, *Pub. Mod. Lang. Ass.*, XIX, 162.

⁴ Cf. Schick in *Temple of Glas*, p. cxix.

⁵ Brandl (*T. of E.*, p. 131) remarks: "I 1 hat besondere ähnlichkeit mit dem eingange eines gedichts, welches ebenfalls eine vision des paradises enthält und von Wright aus einem ms. des 15. jahrhunderts in Rel. Ant. I 26 gedruckt worden ist:

myself walkyng all alone
Full of thought, of joy desperat,
To my hert makyng my mone," etc.

But the most attentive reading of the song printed by Wright fails to reveal any vision of Paardise.

⁶ The details of the other-world experiences of Thomas are conventional. *Christian elements*: For the darkness of the journey cf.

There is a very curious poem, in the same verse-form as *Thomas of Erceldoune*, printed by Wright in his *St. Patrick's Purgatory* (p. 86) from a MS. of the beginning of the fifteenth century. It is about a youth, who, desirous of learning the fate of his dead father and uncle, was guided to hell and paradise by one in a white surplice.

He led hym till a cumly hille
The erth opynd [and] in thei yede.

He found his father in hell. In paradise

He led him to a fayre erber.
.
The pellican and the popynjay,
The tomor and the turtill trew,
A hundirth thousand upon hy,
The nyghtyngale with notis new.

"He saw near at hand the tree 'on which grew the appull that Adam bote,' and from the place where the fruit was plucked blood issued whenever any one appeared who was not purified of his sins."

Owayne Myles (*Eng. Stud.*, I, p. 100); Maundeville (ed. Halliwell), p. 302; for the roaring flood, Maundeville, p. 305; cf. also Becker (*Mediæval Visions*, p. 61): "The loathsome flood or river is a conspicuous feature in almost all detailed early Christian accounts of hell." *Fairy elements*: For the usual view of eating in the other world see Child, *Ballads*, I, 322; Hartland, *Science of Fairy-Tales*, ch. III; Meyer and Nutt, I, 299; Scott, *Dem. and Witchcraft*, p. 125. For silence as a wise measure in the other world, Child, *Ballads*, I, 322. So ballad *Thomas A 15*. Sir Orfeo and his wife say nothing when they meet in fairyland (*Am. Jour. Phil.*, VII, 193). But Thomas is not told to be speechless, only to say nothing to any one but the fairy queen. Perhaps the object here is the secrecy so dear to the fairy nature (See Brandl, *T. of E.*, p. 24). In general, "Kings or Queens of the Otherworld, when they entered into relations with mortals, established a sort of taboo" (Schofield, *Eng. Lit.*, p. 191). On this point see Meyer and Nutt, I, 143, 150, 299; Schofield, *Lays of Graelent and Lanval*, *Pub. Mod. Lang. Ass.*, xv, 166.

He led hym forth upon [a] playne
 He was war of a pynakyll pigt.
 Sechan had he never seyne
 Of clothes of gold burnyshed brigt.

Ther under sate a creature,
 As brigt as any son beme,
 And angels did hym gret honoure.
 "Lo! childe," he said, "this is thyn eme!"

This poem may have no relation whatever to our romance, but it certainly offers some interesting parallelisms. Of correspondences in diction there are a number. Compare with the third line I have quoted, line 177 of *Thomas*:

Scho lede hym in-till a faire herbere.

In the arbor of *Thomas*, among other birds, there are also popinjays and nightingales. The stanzas about the youth's "eme" recall the first appearance of the fay in *Thomas*. Of her, too, it is said (ll. 47, 48):

Als dose þe sonne on someres daye,
 þat faire lady hir selfe scho schone.

We might even compare lines 46 and 63:

Swylke one ne saghe j neuer none;

 And als clere golde hir brydill it schone.

But though the *number* of resemblances in diction is striking, we should not emphasize them overmuch, for the phrases are all more or less conventional. More important is the entrance to the "cumly hille," somewhat like that of *Thomas*.

Scho ledde hym jn at Eldone hill,
 Vndir-nethe a derne lee.¹

¹ Of course, however, this is a commonplace of *fairy* material.

Another interesting coincidence with *Thomas* is the "fair arbor" in the other world. And the arbor is associated with the tree of which Adam ate—a tree which bears testimony against sinners. In *Thomas of Erceldoune*, although the true fairy-reason for denying Thomas the fruit would doubtless be that, eating it, he must remain in the other world, the reason *stated* is

þe fende the will atteynt.
 If þou it plokke, sothely to saye,
 Thi soule gose to þe fyre of helle;
 It commes neuer owte or domesday,
 Bot þer jn payne ay for to duelle.

In the poem given by Wright, the tree is in the terrestrial paradise, exactly where it should be;¹ in *Thomas* the incident of the fruit is not connected with the lady's castle, as we should expect in a pure fairy-tale, but immediately precedes the pointing out of the ways to heaven, paradise, etc. Finally, the two poems are alike, and different from other stories of visits to the Christian other-world, in conducting their hero thither in the flesh, in giving only a brief and general description of the place, and in treating the theme with an unusual, almost lyric, simplicity.

What are we to conclude as to the relationship of these poems? The MS. of the shorter seems to be of about the same age as the Thornton and Cambridge MSS. of *Thomas*. But as any poem may be much older than its MS., one of these might well be antecedent to the other. If there were any influence of one upon the other, however, it would have to exist in spite of or previous to² difference of dialect. Granting the possibility of influence, it is a little hard to decide which poem is to be regarded as the source. But the incidents which they have in common are more vital

¹ Genesis, 2, 15-17; *Owayne Myles*, st. 146, p. 108; second text, lines 527-8, p. 119.

² In case there were an earlier version of one of the poems.

and essential to the shorter poem. The author of *Thomas may*, then, with this poem in mind, have added the "arbor" and with it the tree of knowledge, possibly also the roads to heaven, etc., to his hero's other-world experiences. The arbor or garden,¹ being common to Paradise and to faëry, might serve to attract Christian material into a fairy-tale, or *vice versa*. The rather purposeless and clumsy way in which the arbor is fitted into our romance—since it directly follows Thomas's demand for food, but, leaving him hungry, serves only to introduce the routes to heaven, etc.—suggests that the poet either interpolated the scene, or was fitting together with some difficulty parts of two or three stories. Taking into account the numerous points of likeness between the two poems, we conclude that the author of *Thomas of Erceldoune* very likely had in mind this poem, or one very similar. In any case, our examination of the poem has been instructive, as showing by analogy how the incident of the fruit and the arbor is probably to be understood.² It is plain, moreover, that whether their immediate source be a particular story or mere floating tradition, *Thomas of Erceldoune* contains suggestions of Christian other-world description combined with romance in a fashion for which we find no analogy in the stories hitherto considered—"Als y yod on a Mounday," *Merlin*, *Tannhäuser*, *Ogier*, or *Meilerius*; and that the description is handled by the poet with a brevity and lightness of touch almost unknown in religious poems on this theme.³

¹ As to fairy gardens, see Meyer and Nutt, sections 6, 39, 43.

² The ballads repeat this interpretation. May not the poet have intended a fusion of the Christian and the fairy conceptions, using the tree of knowledge because he happened to be dealing with paradise (possibly by imitation of some such poem as that under consideration) but also preventing Thomas from eating, that he might return to give his prophecy?

³ Contrast, for example, *The Eleven Pains of Hell* (E. E. T. S., No. 49, pp. 211 ff.).

G. To complete our study, we must examine the relation of the prophetic and the vision-elements in the poem to the rest. Certain details in this romance seem to point pretty clearly toward the prophecies which follow. The fairy-love and the sojourn in elfland may obviously be employed to give weight to prophecies.¹ So of course may the roads to heaven, hell, and paradise. The "tiend to hell" or some other device for getting the hero back to earth is of value, as explaining how one lured away to fairyland, and so in the way of obtaining prophetic power, returned to earth, where he might exercise it. The gift of the tongue that never will lie has marked advantages for a prophet. If I am correct in my interpretation of the loathly-lady incident, that, too, can be directly utilized toward the same end. The loathly-lady properly tests the hero and rewards him; why not reward him with the gift of prophecy?² Other details, it is true, and some of them very characteristic, can hardly be shown to have any such bearing. The injunction to keep silence, the episode of the fruit, the journey through darkness and the flood, the delusion regarding the passage of time, the character of the lady (a huntress), the mistaking of the fay for the Virgin—no one of these relates in any way to the prophecy. On the other hand, none of these is an essential feature in the history. They are rather embellishments or "corroborative detail."

¹ Cf. the old Irish tract of "The Champion's Ecstasy," in which Conn gains knowledge of the future during what seems to be an other-world sojourn. (O'Curry, *MS. Mat.*, p. 385.) The same tract faintly suggests the connection of fairy and Christian other-worlds in *T. of E.*, for though the land whither Conn journeys seems to be of fairy (or pagan) character, the "Champion" is one of Adam's race who has come back from death.

² It may be remarked—though the suggestion is far-fetched—that the original transformed hag prophesied to the hero in the sense of promising him or his descendants sovereignty (*Academy*, xli, 425).

Putting the matter in another way, the plot of the romance, as we know it, is fundamentally this: A beautiful fay wooed by the hero turns out to be a "loathly-lady." She carries off her lover to her underground home, where she rewards him by returning to her beautiful form, since he has stood the test, has loved her despite her warning, and has followed at her command in spite of her distressing transformation. Finally she sends him back to earth, rewarding him further with the gift of the truthful tongue. Now in *Meilerius* we have an analogous story—recounting the hero's love for a supernatural woman, her loss of beauty, an other-world sojourn (possibly), and the gift of truth—with the addition of *prophetic power*. The plot seems by no means incompatible with prophecy. As for the subordinate features of the story, they are, as I have shown, either neutral or actually in keeping with prophetic intention. It would appear, then, that the prophecies are not so disparate as Professor Child thinks them from the romance.¹

The vision-form of which we have found suggestions in part of the poem accords better with prophecy than with some features of the romance. The vision, pure and simple, would call almost necessarily for prophecy or some other kind of instruction to give it purpose.² On the other hand, the loathly-lady episode, itself quite consistent with prophecy, would seem incongruous in a vision. Moreover, the vision would naturally occupy a much shorter time than Thomas's three years in Elfland; and the induction to the poem actually begins with "this endres day," thus seeming to throw the whole story into the recent past. One is forced to conclude that our poet either in the first instance used

¹ Child, *Ballads*, I, 319.

² The vision used as a vehicle for prophecy is illustrated by Adam Davy's *Dreams* about Edward II, and further by the vision of Art as he slept on his hunting-mound (O'Curry, *MS. Mat.*, p. 391).

inconsistent conventions with considerable carelessness (as poets have been known to do) or put together older stories containing incongruous elements.

We have now disentangled the four main threads which are so intricately interwoven in the fabric of *Thomas*—the story of a fay who is a “loathly-lady,” who lures her lover to her castle and presently sends him home, endowed with the truthful tongue; a glimpse of the Christian other-world; suggestions of a vision of the allegorical, non-ecclesiastical type; and prophecy. To the first, the fairy-story, belongs the general framework of the romance (whether or not it originally included the loathly-lady features), and the stock detail of fairy-lore which it has attracted to itself. The second accounts for the roads to heaven, hell, and purgatory, and perhaps for the fair arbor and the fruit. Third, the vision is to be traced in the induction with its use of the first person, its May morning atmosphere, and its rest under the semely tree; and perhaps in the passage immediately following, which describes, still in the first person, and with conventional details of costume, the meeting of the hero and the lady. Prophecy, the fourth component of *Thomas*, appears only in the second and third fyfts, but relates itself readily to each of the other three. No one of the four sorts of material, as has been shown, is in any sense the invention of the author.

Analyzing the poem, part by part, we may divide it thus: opening in the vision-manner, lines 25 to 72, with which we should perhaps connect lines 693–694; view of the other-world, 171–222; prophecy, 301–304, 323–700; loathly-lady story, lines 97–140, 233–236 (or—if we accept the curious passage interpolated in the Lansdowne ms.—233–252), 309–322; general frame-work of a fairy-love and fairyland sojourn, easy enough to combine with most of the other elements, all other passages in the poem. The demarcation

of different sorts of material is, however, extremely difficult; and our analysis demonstrates chiefly the close texture of the whole.

Are we to believe that the poem in its present form, so cunningly wrought of various material, is the production of the original author, or a working over of earlier pieces? The mere variety of material is in itself inconclusive. We must take into account, however, the two singular facts of the change of person from first to third at line 72, and back to first for a moment in line 276; and the references to a "story" in lines 83 and 123. Four hypotheses present themselves: (a) the changes of person are due to corruption of the text, the references to a *story* being a literary device; (b) both the change of person and the references to a *story* are devices of the poet; (c) the first change of person and the hints of a story are to be set down to literary artifice, the second change of person to corruption of the text; (d) these peculiarities result from imperfect welding together or working over of an older story or stories.

None of these theories admits of rigorous verification. It will appear, however, that the two last are better founded than the others. Though (a) might account for line 276, the change at line 72 seems too marked, and the new form too consistently held, to be due to mere blundering. Both (b) and (c) have considerable plausibility, but (c) is preferable as offering a more satisfactory explanation of the apparent slip in line 276. All these three—(a), (b), and (c)—leave out of account the inconsistencies in subject-matter already noted. Lastly, (d) is supported, though hardly proved, by certain features of the passages in question. The first change of person, considered in connection with the style of the opening passage, suggests at once a patching together of a vision about a fairy-lady, and some story in the third person. The change in line 276,

Till one a daye, so hafe I grace,
My luffly lady sayde to mee,

is not so easily accounted for. It may be due—even on the hypothesis assumed for the moment—to corruption of the text. Or we may have here—in spite of the discrepancy in time, a discrepancy less violent than that between “endres daye” and “three years”—a fragment of the vision we have postulated. Again, the lines may indicate imperfect assimilation of still another story in the first person. This, by the way, would hardly be the same as the “storye” quoted in other passages of our romance, since a writer putting together two stories in the first person would scarcely introduce the third person. The references to a “storye,” if they can be identified with any specific part of the material, seem to belong to the loathly-lady episode. The second reference occurs in the midst of one of the loathly-lady scenes. The first is connected with the meeting of the fay, mistaken for the Virgin, at Eldon tree—an incident which, being conventional, might easily have been part of one “story” with the second. It is possible, then, to postulate at least two sources: a vision of a lady and an other-world experience, a vehicle for prophecy; and a loathly-lady story, probably much like the tale of Meilerius. In this way (d) may explain not only the changes of person and the allusions to the story, but also the incongruities of the poem.

It is clear that we may dismiss (a) and (b) as leaving too much out of account. Whether one decides for (c) or (d) will largely depend on how strongly one feels the discrepancies and incongruities which have been pointed out: (c) convicts the original poet, gifted though he evidently was with artistic feeling, of rather careless workmanship; (d) supposes a poet who worked over and adapted material with

some heedlessness as to details, but with great skill. One fact, however, so far as it has weight, is in favor of the former view—the uniform quality of the verse. There are no marked changes in meter or rime-scheme to indicate patching.

In either case, we cannot hope to trace precisely the growth of the romance. If we adopt (c), we may surmise some such process as this: A popular tradition of a visit by Thomas to fairyland may very well have existed before the poem was written. (Unless, however, such a story were attached to Thomas's name, or had some unusual feature, it could never be shown to be the basis of our romance; the *motif* is too common). Given the bare outlines of such a story about Thomas, the writer may have taken a hint from the "Als y yod on a Mounday,"—which combines prophecy in dialogue-form with a visit to a sort of fairy castle—and may then have added the Meilerius material from some source. The three stories would naturally be drawn together by the connection between prophecy and faëry common to them all. Suppose there were no such tradition, at that time, concerning Thomas; he was nevertheless a renowned prophet, whose name was valuable as authority, and the machinery of the poem could still be furnished by the other two stories.¹ The vision-induction might be a literary flourish, and the Christian other-world material, from current tradition or from a story similar to that of the youth who went to Paradise, added merely by way of elaboration. For such details as the tiend to hell the writer had only to draw upon popular folk-lore. Finally,

¹ It is much to be desired that we have some popular utterance on the name *True Thomas*. If any tradition accounting for the name has existed *apart* from the ballad and the romance, the name may be independent of the whole Meilerius story. If so, it might nevertheless attract the Meilerius material into the story of Thomas.

the prophetic fyfts may have been written, in their present form, at the same time and by the same author as the romance, though they may have been largely made up of earlier scraps of prophecy.

Our most complex hypothesis, (d), accounting for the peculiarities of the poem by imperfect assimilation of earlier works, offers us almost an unchartered freedom of speculation.

1. The writer of the original poem may have used all the material now included in it, gathering it from various popular sources, but may have put the whole into the form of a vision. A later writer might have worked this over, introducing the third person almost anywhere, but retaining the induction.

2. But certain parts of the material seem better adapted than others to the vision-form. As has already been pointed out, the chronology of the story is confused. It begins with "this endres daye," and goes on with the events of three years. The loathly-lady story may be conceived as appearing in a vision, but not very readily. The vision, moreover, being a didactic form, would be cumbered by the wealth of incident given in the present romance, and would doubtless proceed much more briefly and directly to the business in hand. The apparition of a lady who should take the hero to the other-world and speak prophecies to him—suggested perhaps by "Als y yod on a Mounday," and by popular stories of fays, possibly already connected with Thomas—would be machinery enough for the vision.¹ And such a lady we find intimately associated with the vision-like opening passage. This lady might explain the geography of the other world

¹ May the vision account, at least in part, for the fact that the lady is nowhere classified as fay or what not? It is only in the ballads that she is called Queen of Elfland.

to Thomas, by way of giving him greater authority. Such a vision as this might have been the vehicle for the Halidon Hill prophecy of 1333 which Murray postulates.¹

The lady of this supposed vision has two points of contact, perhaps, with the Meilerius story. First, obviously, her connection with prophecy. Second, and more doubtful, the huntress character which she evidently possessed, which is emphasized in almost the first lines of the romance. If there is really some such character belonging to the fays of Meilerius' acquaintance, this might serve to attach them to the other legend. A later writer, seeing the possibilities of the Meilerius material, might add it to the rest. And here we have a motive for the working over suggested by the changes in person. For why work over the whole, unless to add fresh material? With the working over, we should have the third person, the loathly-lady incident, *i. e.*, the "storye," and the gift of the truthful tongue.² At the same time, through oversight on the part of the poet, the confusions in chronology which we have noted may have crept in. Thomas's three-year stay in Elfland, and the tiend to hell which was the occasion of his dismissal—details readily associated with other-world visits—might be added out of a desire to embellish the narrative.

3. The original vision may have been even simpler and more purely of fairy character than has been suggested above,

¹ And would not a shorter story than our present romance accord better with the shorter prophecy?

² It may now seem more remarkable than before that the loathly-lady has entirely disappeared from the ballads. But the ballad writer might not see her connection with "the truthful tongue." In the prophecies, too, he had no interest. Nor is it strange that the loathly-lady episode has dropped out of the later prophetic poems based on *T. of E.*, when we consider that the narrative element in those poems is simplified almost to the point of extinction.

and the Christian other-world details may have been added later, perhaps at the same time as the Meilerius material.

If we adopt (2) or (3), we may suppose that around the nucleus of the Halidon Hill prophecy fresh predictions were gathered, either at the same time the Meilerius story was added, or before, or later. However that may be, the connection of the prophecies with a "lady" is plain throughout. They are spoken in answer to questions put by Thomas, and the third fytt closes with the promise of the lady to meet Thomas at Huntley banks. The author or redactor of the poem in its present form clearly had every intention of combining romance and prophecy.

It is plain that we can only suggest possibilities, and can never trace exactly the stages through which *Thomas of Er-celdoune* developed, either in the hands of its sole author—if we assume his existence—or in the hands of a series of poets and redactors. Nor can we, by the most patient investigation, demonstrate a servile following, by the poet of the romance as we know it, of any known story. Hints he doubtless gathered here and there; much of his material was literary commonplace. He handled it all with freedom and individuality.

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